

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 EA-10 AID-05 ACDA-12  
OMB-01 HA-05 /107 W  
-----041355 081118Z /11

O P 080820Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7881  
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 3697

E. O. 11652: NA  
TAGS: PGOV, AF  
SUBJECT: AFGHAN PRESIDENT TARAHI'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL PRESS  
CONFERENCE

1. ON MAY 6, NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAHI, PRESIDENT OF THE NEW  
PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN (PDPA) REGIME OF  
AFGHANISTAN, RECEIVED THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS AT KABUL FOR HIS  
FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE. LAWRENCE MALKIN, "TIME" MAGAZINE  
CORRESPONDENT, HAS PROVIDED US WITH A COURTESY COPY OF THE  
REPORT HE HAS FILED:

2. BEGIN TEXT:

PRIME MINISTER NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAHI, 61, A MEDIUM-SIZED  
(5'7") AND MILD-MANNERED AFGHAN NOVELIST-TURNED-POLITICAL,  
EMERGED FROM THE SHADOWS SATURDAY MORNING IN HIS NEW OFFICE AND  
HANDLED QUESTIONS DEFTLY AND MOSTLY WITHOUT POLEMICS. HE WAS  
FAR MORE FORTHCOMING THAN ANYONE HAD BEEN BEFORE, AND HIS  
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PUBLICLY MODERATE AND IDEALISTIC STATEMENTS ACCORDED WITH WHAT  
HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE BEEN SAYING IN PRIVATE TO INQUIRING  
DIPLOMATS. MAJOR QUESTION MARK IS WHETHER, LIKE CHILE'S ALLENDE,  
HE CAN MAINTAIN THE INDEPENDENCE OF AFGHANISTAN AGAINST EXTERNAL  
PRESSURES AND POSSIBLE INTERNECINE RIVALRIES AND VARIOUS DIF-  
FERENCES OF OPINION.

3. TARAKI WEARS A MOUSTACHE, HAS THE HIGH-DOMED FOREHEAD OF AN INTELLECTUAL -- WHICH HE IS, AND HANDLED QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANY PRECONDITIONS IN SOFTSPOKEN, CORRECT, BUT HALTING ENGLISH. HE HAS SERVED AS AFGHAN PRESS ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON AND EDITOR OF THE AFGHAN NEWS AGENCY, BUT CLAIMED THAT THE DAOUD REGIME BARRED HIM FROM WORKING IN KABUL UPON RETURN. SO, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HE SET UP A FREELANCE TRANSLATION AGENCY WHICH HANDLED WORK FOR THE U.S. AND OTHER EMBASSIES. HIS MANNER WAS FRIENDLY, SOMETIMES BANTERING AND OCCASIONALLY, AS FORMER JOURNALIST, AMUSED AT CROSS-QUESTIONING OF THE PRESS, WHICH SAT AROUND A HUGE ROUND TABLE (MAYBE 20 FEET ACROSS) COVERED WITH GREEN VELVET AND FIRED QUESTIONS.

4. THE KEY POINT IN HIS FOREIGN POLICY STANCE WAS REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN: THAT AFGHANISTAN WANTS TO PRESERVE ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM ALL FOREIGN POWERS, WHICH HAS BEEN A DELICATE PROBLEM OF BALANCE FOR ANY AFGHAN GOVERNMENT. IN PARTICULAR, HE WAS ASKED WHETHER AFGHANISTAN WOULD AGREE TO MILITARY PACTS WITH ANY COUNTRY, WHICH IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE SOVIET UNION HAS IN THE PAST PRESSED AFGHANISTAN TO DO SO. TARAKI REPLIED: "WE STAND FOR NON-ALIGNMENT. WE WANT NO MILITARY PACTS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN MILITARY BLOCS. WE WANT PEACE AND FREEDOM EVERYWHERE." "AS FOR THE UNITED STATES, HE SAID, HE HOPES WASHINGTON "WILL MAINTAIN FRIENDLY RELATIONS. THE RELATIONSHIP WILL DEPEND ON THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT, AND AID PROJECTS." THUS HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT AFGHANISTAN, WHICH FOR CENTURIES HAS PLAYED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONE POWER OFF AGAINST ANOTHER, WOULD WELCOME ALL COMERS. THE SAME APPLIED TO RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBORS, WHICH HE SAID "DEPENDS ON THEIR SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION." HE WELCOMED THE RECOGNITION OF PAKISTAN AND SAID HE HOPED THE QUESTION OF PUSHTUNISTAN WOULD BE SOLVED "IN A PEACEFUL WAY WITH OUR PAKISTANI BROTHERS." THIS IS ANOTHER KEY. TARAKI DID NOT BRING IT UP, AND GAVE A NONADVENTURIST ANSWER TO THIS CORRESPONDENT'S QUESTION. HE WAS ALSO ASKED WHETHER AFGHANISTAN WOULD HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. HE REPLIED: "OUR RELATIONSHIP WILL DEPEND ON THEIR SUPPORT FOR US. WE ARE NONALIGNED. EVENTS AWAIT CONFIRMATION OF THIS STANCE AND MAY TAKE MONTHS TO UNFOLD." HE WAS FURTHER ASKED WHETHER HE SAW ANY DANGERS TO THE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE AND REPLIED: "FOR THE TIME BEING, NONE. PROPAGANDA FROM SOME SOURCES SAYS WE ARE A SATELLITE. WE ARE NOT."

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

5. IN DESCRIBING HIS PARTY, TARAKI FOUGHT CLEAR OF ALL LABELS. HE SAID IT NOW IS CALLED THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHAN-ISTAN AND DECLINED TO BE PINNED ON WHETHER THAT MEANT IT WAS MARXIST OR COMMUNIST. CERTAIN FAMILIAR PHRASES OCCURRED, BUT AGAIN, EVENTS WILL HAVE TO DETERMINE THEIR REAL MEANING. HE SAID THE PARTY PROGRAM WAS "NOT MERE REFORMISM," AND THAT HIS WAS A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT DEPENDING ON THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE -- "THE WORKING CLASSES, THE MIDDLE CLASSES." HE INSISTED AFGHAN-ISTAN WOULD NOT MODEL ITSELF AFTER ANY OTHER COUNTRY, BUT ACT IN ITS OWN CONTEXT TO HELP THE "OPPRESSED PEOPLE AND THE WORKING PEASANTRY." HE HIMSELF COMES FROM A FAMILY OF HERDSMEN, HIS FATHER WAS A LABORER AND HE WAS A CLERK IN A SMALL FRUIT COMPANY WHEN YOUNG. HE WAS SENT TO BOMBAY FOR TRAINING IN THE 1930 . HE STUDIED THERE AT NIGHT SCHOOL AND NEVER WENT TO A UNIVER-SITY. ON SPECIFIC PLANS, HE SPOKE ONLY IN OUTLINE. HIS PARTY'S MANIFESTO FOR YEARS, HE SAID, HAS STRESSED LAND REFORM, PEASANT WELFARE, NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, AND A GOVERNMENT ROLE IN COMMERCE  
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AND INDUSTRY, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HE ADDED: "NATIONAL-IZATION, YES, IF THERE IS SOMETHING WORTH NATIONALIZING." BY THIS HE MEANT THAT THE OLD REGIME HAD NOT LEFT ANYTHING BEHIND WORTH TAKING OVER. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ALL BANKS WERE NATIONAL-IZED SOME TIME AGO. HE SAID HIS PARTY HAS A MEMBERSHIP OF 50,000 AND WIDE SUPPORT, ADDING: "THE INTELLIGENTSIA ARE THE MAIN FORCE

OF THE COUNTRY, AND EVERY EFFORT HAS TO BE MADE TO ATTRACT THEM. WE MUST REEDUCATE THEM TO THIS ABOUT THE PEOPLE, AND NOT TO THINK ABOUT THEMSELVES, AND THEIR HOUSE AND THEIR CAR." ASKED TO SPECIFY AFGHANISTAN'S PROBLEMS, HE SMILINGLY SAID: "WE HAVE LOTS OF PROBLEMS. WE JUST WANT TO BE HELPED BY EVERY SOURCE. AS THE MULLAH SAID TO HIS STUDENT: "TELL ME TO GIVE YOU BREAD WHEN YOU ARE HUNGRY." THE STUDENT SAID: "I AM ALWAYS HUNGRY."

6. ON THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, HE SAID THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, WITH A MEMBERSHIP OF 35, INCLUDING FIVE MILITARY MEN AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, WOULD BE "SUPERIOR" TO THE GOVERNMENT. THERE WILL ALSO BE A "CENTRAL COMMITTEE," BUT HE DID NOT SAY HOW MANY, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE THE POLITICAL BALANCE FOR THE TOP BODY IS STILL UNDER NEGOTIATION.

7. ASKED ABOUT CASUALTIES LAST WEEK, HE INSISTED THAT ONLY 72-73 HAD BEEN KILLED ON BOTH SIDES, THAT ONLY 20 OR 25 PEOPLE HAD BEEN ARRESTED, THAT FORMER MINISTERS WHO DID NOT RESIST HAD BEEN RELEASED AND SENT HOME, AND THAT IT WAS "FALSE PROPAGANDA" THAT THOUSANDS WERE KILLED. THERE IS NO WAY TO CONFIRM ANY OF THIS, EXCEPT THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE YET OF WIDESPREAD DEATH OR KILLING AND THE COUNTRY REMAINS CALM. END OF TEXT.  
ELIOT

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## Message Attributes

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